



Resident Canada Geese

Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Challenge of Managing Geese

Managing populations of Canada geese can be a challenging responsibility given the diversity in landscape and ownership patterns and the desire to keep populations at levels that are both sustainable and appropriate for environmental and sociological conditions. There are some 19 management populations and 11 subspecies of Canada geese for which the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and other agencies have management responsibility. A number of these populations are at or below management goals. "Resident" Canada geese, however, make up one population that is well *above* desired levels.

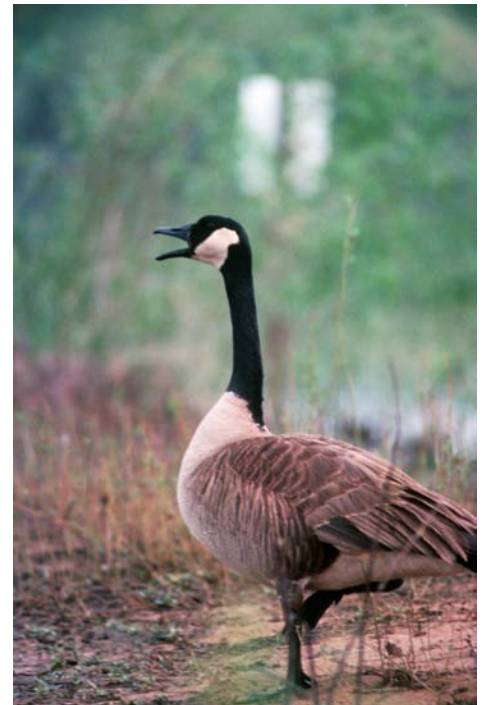
Management Actions

On August 19, 1999, the Service issued a notice of intent to prepare a management plan and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for resident Canada goose management. The purpose of the EIS is to evaluate strategies to reduce, manage, and control resident Canada goose populations in the continental United States and to reduce related damages. In conjunction with the EIS is a rulemaking process, the objective of which is to provide a regulatory mechanism that would allow State and local agencies, other Federal agencies, and groups and individuals to respond to damage complaints or damages by resident Canada geese.

What Are Resident Canada Geese?

Resident Canada geese are those that nest and reside predominantly in the U.S. and do not have the characteristically long north/south migration patterns so common in the rest of the populations and species of Canada geese. Because resident Canada geese live in temperate climates with relatively stable breeding habitat conditions and low numbers of predators, tolerate human and other disturbances, have a relative abundance of preferred habitat provided by current urban/suburban landscaping techniques, and fly relatively short distances to winter, they exhibit a consistently high annual production and survival.

Over the past 10 years, resident Canada goose populations in the Atlantic Flyway increased an average of 1 % per year and numbered over one million in the spring of 2005. In the Mississippi Flyway, resident Canada geese increased about 5 % per year since 1996 and currently number about 1.6 million.



Resident Canada Goose



Migratory Bird Management

Mission

To conserve migratory bird populations and their habitats for future generations, through careful monitoring and effective management.

Flyway Council input was an integral part of the national management strategy. All four Flyway Councils prepared or updated Flyway-specific resident Canada goose management plans.

As part of the EIS process, public scoping meetings were held in February, 2000, at nine locations across the country. Attendance totaled approximately 1,250 and over 3,000 comments were received. A Draft EIS was released on March 1, 2002, with a 90-day public comment period. Attendance at the 11 public meetings totaled 429 and over 2,700 written comments were received.

A proposed rule was published on August 21, 2003. The comment period closed October 20, 2003. Over 2,900 comments were received.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Final EIS analyzes seven management alternatives: 1) No Action; 2) Increase Use of Nonlethal Control and Management (no currently permitted activities); 3) Increase Use of Nonlethal Control and Management (continued permitting of those activities generally considered nonlethal); 4) Expanded Hunting Methods and Opportunities; 5) Depredation Order Management (consisting of an Airport Depredation Order; a Nest and Egg Depredation Order; an Agricultural Depredation Order; and a Public Health Depredation Order); 6) Integrated Damage Management and Population Control (PROPOSED ACTION); and 7) General Depredation Order.

The Proposed Action would establish a new regulation with three main program components:

1. The first component would consist of specific control and depredation orders (Airports, Nests and Eggs, Agricultural, and Public Health) designed to address resident Canada goose depredation, damage, and conflict management. Depredation orders are regulations allowing the take of migratory birds without a Federal permit. These actions could be

conducted by the appropriate State agency, the Service or another official agent (such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services), or in some cases, the affected public.

2. The second component would provide expanded hunting methods and opportunities to increase the sport harvest of resident Canada geese above that which results from existing September special Canada goose seasons.
3. The third component would authorize a resident Canada goose population control program, or management take (defined as a special management action that is needed to reduce certain wildlife populations when traditional management programs are unsuccessful in preventing overabundance of the population). The intent of the program would be to reduce resident Canada goose populations in order to protect personal property and agricultural crops, protect other interests from injury, resolve or prevent injury to people, property,

agricultural crops, or other interests from resident Canada geese, and reduce or eliminate potential concerns about human health.

Certain components (management take, additional hunting methods, and agricultural depredation order) would be restricted to the States in the Atlantic, Central, and Mississippi Flyways.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement will have a 30-day public inspection period.

The Next Step

Following the 30-day review period, the Service will issue a Record of Decision and a final regulation, or rule, to implement the EIS Proposed Action.

For More Information:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Migratory Bird Management
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 4107
Arlington, VA 22203
703 358 1714
<http://migratorybirds.fws.gov>

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Resident Canada goose with young